

Dear Dave, re chances of Middle-East peace

11/6/91

The enclosed Post clipping reporting that the Saudis want to buy \$ billion worth of US fighter planes raises, among other questions, why, for what essential purpose?

If for defense purposes, then the defense would be against an attack from either Iraq or Iran. Neither is at all probable after what the US did to protect all the Gulf countries countries from Saddam. On the other hand, in the unlikely change in US policy that would leave the Saudis to defend themselves, all the equipment in the world would not enable them with their relatively small population, to defend themselves from an attack by either of these greatly more populous countries.

So, the purpose of this purchase is to be prepared to attack and the only countries other than these two, which there is no chance at all the Saudis would attack, would be Israel.

One could read significance into the timing: the peace conference that won't bring peace.

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Go along with this is what I called to your attention after the end of the Gulf war. The US had planned to leave a deposit of equipment in Saudi Arabia. It declined to permit this. It wants that US equipment to be removed or in the alternative, to be sold to Saudi Arabia itself.

There has been no reporting of which I am aware that indicates the extraordinary amount of military equipment the Saudis already have suitable for military attack. It includes planes with a range that would enable it to bomb even southeastern Europe.

They are not likely to attack Greece or Turkey or Iraq or Iran. What is left?

Only Israel.

With this publicly known, in addition to what is not common knowledge, how genuine can the Bush/Baker "peace" conference proposal they have coerced really be? It cannot reasonably be a genuine belief that real or meaningful peace is a possibility now more in that of the future than can be seen.

There is a real problem for Bush in this: if the US does not sell the Saudis ~~these~~ those fighter planes, they can, as they have in the past, buy them elsewhere, like from Britain and France. Whose overtly anti-Israel policies the Saudis like anyway.

On the media, we'll see if there is any analysis or commentary on whether or not the Saudis want these planes for defensive purposes only, whether that can be their purpose.

One does not have to like Shamir, as I do not, to be able to see that he has a visible purpose in responding to anti-Israel moves with new settlements. It is his only way of making any meaningful response.

To the degree he considers possible I believe he will continue to make it clear that he will not be intimidated. Such responses will inevitably reduce the virtually non-existent prospects of a negotiated peace - as least farthure into the future than can reasonably be estimated today.

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